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Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A structure for joining abutting ends of two webs of labels, each web having two ends, the structure comprising:

a splice member for overlapping the abutting ends of the two label webs, the splice member comprising a heat shrinkable material; and  
an adhesive coating on a surface of the splice member for securing the splice member to the two ends of the label webs.

2. The structure according to claim 1, wherein the heat shrinkable material of the splice member is transparent.

3. The structure according to claim 1, wherein the heat shrinkable material of the splice member comprises a polyethylene film.

4. The structure according to claim 1, wherein the label webs are from two separate label rolls.

5. A structure for supplying heat shrinkable labels to a labeling machine comprising:

(a) at least two elongated webs of a heat shrinkable laminate, each web provided with a continuous series of printed labels thereon, the labels positioned end to end along each web, each web having a leading end and a trailing end; and

(b) a clear heat shrinkable splice tape, the splice tape having a top and a bottom surface, an adhesive on the bottom surface of the splice tape, the adhesive adhering the splice tape to the leading end of one web and to the trailing end of another web such that they form a continuous web,

the laminate material of the webs and the material of the splice tape having substantially equivalent shrinkage rates such that, upon application of heat to a label and splice tape within the labeling machine, the label shrinks along with the splice tape without causing substantial distortion to the printing on the label.

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6. The structure according to claim 5 wherein the splice tape is adhered to the ends of the webs over the printing thereon.

7. The structure according to claim 5 wherein the laminate material of the webs comprises a polypropylene film.

8. A structure as claimed in claim 5, wherein each of the webs comprises a laminate of two plies of polypropylene film.

9. The structure according to claim 5 wherein the material of the splice tape comprises a polyethylene film.

10. A structure as claimed in claim 9 wherein each of the webs comprises a laminate of a polypropylene film.

11. The structure according to claim 5 wherein each web is provided on a separate roll.

12. A method for joining ends of two webs of labels each having a leading end and a trailing end to form a continuous web, comprising the steps of:

- a. providing first and second webs of heat shrinkable label material;
- b. providing a splice tape having at least one layer of a heat shrinkable material defining a surface and a coating of adhesive on the surface;
- c. aligning the trailing end of the first web with the leading end of the second web such that the ends abut one another;
- d. adhering the splice tape to the aligned ends of the two webs so as to form a continuous web.

13. The method according to claim 12, wherein the at least one layer of the splice tape is transparent.

14. The method according to claim 12, wherein the label material of each of the webs comprises:

- a. a first laminate of heat shrinkable material;
- b. an adhesive in contact with the first laminate;
- c. ink in contact with the adhesive; and

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d. a second laminate of heat shrinkable material in contact with said ink, the first and second laminates having substantially equivalent shrinkage rates.

15. The method according to claim 14, wherein the material of the splice tape has a substantially equivalent shrinkage rate as the first and second laminate of the webs.

16. The method according to claim 12 wherein each web is provided on a separate roll.

17. The method according to claim 12 further comprising the step of winding the continuous web onto a roll.

18. A container having sidewalls, a top surface and a bottom surface, comprising:

a heat shrinkable label having first and second segments wrapped around the periphery of the container, and each label segment having a first and second end and an inside and outside surface,

the first end of the first label segment secured to the sidewall of the container, the first label segment wrapped around a first portion of the periphery of the container ,

the second end of the first label segment juxtaposed to and aligned with the first end of the second label segment; and

a splice tape having at least one layer of a heat shrinkable material and a layer of an adhesive, the adhesive layer of the splice tape joining the juxtaposed and aligned ends of the first and second label segments,

the second label segment wrapped around a second portion of the container periphery,

the second end of the second label segment secured to the first end of the first label segment,

wherein the splice tape and label have been heat shrunk onto the container.

19. The container according to claim 18 wherein the splice tape is positioned on the outside surface of the label segments.

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20. The container according to claim 18 wherein the splice tape is positioned on the inner surfaces of the label segments.

21. A splice tape for joining abutting ends of two webs of heat shrinkable labels, each web having two ends, the splice tape comprising:

at least one layer of a heat shrinkable material for overlapping the abutting ends of the two label webs; and

an adhesive layer for securing the splice tape to the two ends of the label webs.

22. A supply of heat shrinkable labels for a labeling machine comprising:

(a) at least two elongated webs of a heat shrinkable laminate, each web having a longitudinal length and a lateral width and a continuous series of printed labels thereon, the labels positioned end to end along the length of each web, each web having a leading end and a trailing end; and

(b) a splice tape having a longitudinal length and a lateral width and comprising at least one layer of a heat shrinkable material defining a surface, the splice tape further comprising an adhesive coating on the surface of the at least one layer of heat shrinkable material, the splice tape extending transversely with respect to the length of the webs, the splice tape adhered to the leading end of one web and to the trailing end of another web such that the webs form a continuous web.

23. The heat shrinkable label supply according to claim 23 wherein the webs and the splice tape have longitudinal and lateral shrinkage rates, the longitudinal shrinkage rate of the splice tape begin substantially equal to the lateral shrinkage rate of the webs and the lateral shrinkage rate of the splice tape being substantially equal to the longitudinal shrinkage rate of the webs such that, upon application of heat to the splice tape and a label from the continuous web, distortion to the printing on the label caused by differential shrinkage between the splice tape and the label will be substantially limited.